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ABSTRACT

Students nearing high school graduation need more than the skills and information given them in the past 12 years; they also need to know "how" to learn. The Senior Seminar, which is a program offering a semester of interdisciplinary experiential learning, teaches students to become independent, self-directed learners by first presenting the tools and guidelines for learning how to learn and then helping students to put their new knowledge into practice. During each of the two to four week learning blocks students are required to keep a journal recording of their thoughts and activities. Prior to each learning block the student writes up a contract that sets forth the specific objectives he hopes to obtain from the unit of study, how he will attain those objectives, and how his success may be gauged. Students are introduced to problem solving techniques as they learn about self-imposed constraints, the generation of alternatives, the process of elimination, selection of an entry point and how to break a problem apart. A model for problem solving is introduced which lists six steps to be followed in the learning process. The arts of investigation and interviewing are also taught. The course also covers communication skills, how people structure time, the use of "strokes" and the three ego states (parent-adult-child) of transactional analysis. This student manual summarizes the rationale, philosophy and curriculum for the Colorado Springs Public Schools Senior Seminar. (DS)

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ED186154

TO LEARN

HOW

TO LEARN

Senior Seminar

COLORADO SPRINGS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A Semester of Interdisciplinary Experiential Learning

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CALENDAR: Student Schedule of Senior Seminar Learning Blocks

Block 1: _____
Dates of Block: _____
Staff: _____
First Meeting Date: _____
8:30 a.m.-12:00 noon: Individual work on assignment previously given by staff.
1:00 p.m.-3.30 p.m.: at (place) _____

Block 2: _____
Dates of Block: _____
Staff: _____
First Meeting Date: _____
8:30 a.m.-12:00 noon: Individual work on assignment previously given by staff.
1:00 p.m.-3:30 p.m.: at (place) _____

Block 3: _____
Dates of Block: _____
Staff: _____
First Meeting Date: _____
8:30 a.m.-12:00 noon: Individual work on assignment previously given by staff.
1:00 p.m.-3:30 p.m.: at (place) _____

Block 4: _____
Dates of Block: _____
Staff: _____
First Meeting Date: _____
8:30 a.m.-12:00 noon: Individual work on assignment previously given by staff.
1:00 p.m.-3:30 p.m.: at (place) _____

Capstone
Dates of Block: _____
Staff: _____
First Meeting Date: _____
Meeting Place: _____

Final Evaluation
Dates for Final Evaluation: _____
Staff: _____
First Meeting Date: _____
Meeting Place: _____

SUMMARY OF MY EXPECTATIONS FOR EACH SENIOR SEMINAR BLOCK

Block Title (Block #1) _____

Related Walkabout Concepts: Service _____ Creativity _____ Adventure _____
Logical Inquiry _____ Practical Skills _____

Briefly describe how this block will address the concepts you have noted above.

Summarize the types of new information, new skills, attitudes and behaviors you expect to acquire through involvement in this learning block:

Information and concepts I will learn	Skills I will learn	Attidues, values and behaviors I hope to develop
(e.g., Duties of a police officer in this city.	How to interview a public official.	Understand the feelings of the victim of a crime.)

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SUMMARY OF MY EXPECTATIONS FOR EACH SENIOR SEMINAR BLOCK

Block Title (Block #2) _____

Related Walkabout Concepts: Service _____ Creativity _____ Adventure _____
Logical Inquiry _____ Practical Skills _____

Briefly describe how this block will address the concepts you have noted above.

Summarize the types of new information, new skills, attitudes and behaviors you expect to acquire through involvement in this learning block:

Information and concepts I will learn	Skills I will learn	Attidues, values and behaviors I hope to develop

SUMMARY OF MY EXPECTATIONS FOR EACH SENIOR SEMINAR BLOCK

Block Title (Block #3) _____

Related Walkabout Concepts: Service _____ Creativity _____ Adventure _____
Logical Inquiry _____ Practical Skills _____

Briefly describe how this block will address the concepts you have noted above.

Summarize the types of new information, new skills, attitudes and behaviors you expect to acquire through involvement in this learning block:

Information and concepts I will learn	Skills I will learn	Attidues, values and behaviors I hope to develop

SUMMARY OF MY EXPECTATIONS FOR EACH SENIOR SEMINAR BLOCK

Block Title (Block #4) _____

Related Walkabout Concepts: Service _____ Creativity _____ Adventure _____
Logical Inquiry _____ Practical Skills _____

Briefly describe how this block will address the concepts you have noted above.

Summarize the types of new information, new skills, attitudes and behaviors you expect to acquire through involvement in this learning block:

Information and concepts I will learn	Skills I will learn	Attidues, values and behaviors I hope to develop

OUR RATIONALE FOR THE NEED TO LEARN HOW TO LEARN

At one time or another during your experience as a student in school, you have probably questioned the reasons you must attend school, and especially questioned why you must spend so much of your time in school. You have also probably wondered why what you have learned was, for the most part, decided by other people. An answer to these questions stems from the relationship between time and the tremendous quantity of things to learn.

Up to now in the interest of saving your time and energy, teachers have made most of the decisions about what you will learn, how you will learn it, and how you can be sure you developed the important skills and knowledge. (Remember those exams?) Many people have noted the incredible explosion in human knowledge and the increasingly rapid changes in our society. Although schools demand time from you, they also probably save you time because they have filtered the enormous pool of human knowledge and capsulized many of the important concepts and skills many people believe are useful to help you become a successful and happy adult in this society.

Faced with a rapidly changing world, the staff of Senior Seminar are concerned about the need for students nearing graduation to learn more than the skills and information available today. Each of us must learn how to learn. We must develop the skills and confidence to tackle tomorrow's problems about which we can only guess today. Thus, one of the most important goals of Senior Seminar is to help each student become an independent, self-directed learner. The guidance of teachers and organized courses of study have been valuable, but now it is time to learn how to learn on your own those things which you will decide are important to learn. You should become your own teacher.

The whole semester in Senior Seminar has been designed to provide you with the opportunity to take charge of your own intellectual and personal development, to assume responsibility for your own learning. We believe that in the future, you will be the best person qualified to decide what you should know. Moreover, we believe learning how to learn is simply a skill which can be learned and we are here to help. During the first two weeks in Senior Seminar, we have planned a "crash course" in learning how to learn. We seek to introduce you to the skills and approaches you will need to enjoy success in learning in Senior Seminar and, for that matter, the rest of your life. These skills and approaches introduced now will be utilized and reinforced throughout the Senior Seminar semester. Combined with the tools we have developed for you to apply to designing your own learning program, we have generated some important guidelines which will help define new roles for both students and staff members in Senior Seminar. Space for your own notes have been included in this packet of materials which will help you to record information from up-coming discussions which you will use throughout the semester. The tools and guidelines we have developed to help you become a self-directed learner include:

1. Student and staff responsibilities.
2. Journals.
3. Evaluation techniques.
4. Problem-solving skills.
5. Questioning techniques (interviews and discussions).
6. Developing and presenting information.
7. Learning contracts.
8. Interpersonal communication techniques.

SENIOR SEMINAR REQUIREMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Student	Staff

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SUGGESTIONS FOR JOURNAL ENTRIES

If you have never kept a journal on a regular basis before, now you may have a little trouble getting started on one. Listed below are a number of solutions which may help you determine what to write and how best to write it. Keep in mind that these suggestions are flexible. You may wish to use more than one on any particular day. You may want to combine some of them into a new form. You may decide to invent one of your own.

During the next few days, you may be asked to practice some of the following kinds of entries. This will help you determine which forms are best suited to you. Remember, it will be easier to write in your journal if you have really participated in the day's activities.

1. Daily Entry: How do I spend my 24 hours? It would be helpful to include this type of entry for any day you work on Seminar so you will have a record of your block to help with evaluation.

2. Confidence Entry: Keep a barometer of your varying levels of confidence and insecurity. Explain the causes.

3. Decisions Entry: Life goes on, and if it is to get better for you, only you can change it. Record what decisions you made and when you took action.

4. Conflicts Entry: Describe some of the circumstances surrounding any conflicts you were involved in or witnessed. What were the causes? How did you react? Was it resolved? If not, could it have been resolved?

5. Current Events Entry: What is new or particularly notable in politics or business?

6. Success Entry: List days you consider successful and some things that made your day.

7. Bad Day Entry: This is a record of the events on days when it would have been better to have stayed in bed.

8. Cash Flow Entry: How did income and outflow compare today?

9. Inspiration Entry: Record deep feelings, sense of God or higher reality, spiritual or religious experience.

10. Affirmation Entry: Record the nice things done for you and said about you.

11. Depression Entry: List the things and people who may have dragged you down. Why do you feel depressed?

12. "I Gotta Be Me" Entry: Keep a record of where and how your actions showed your individuality.

13. Role Play Entry: Review your day in search of the times and situations when you were pretending, playing a role rather than being openly and honestly you.

14. Special Moments Entry: List the persons or situations that evoked affectionate feelings and thoughts because they were pleasant, intimate, and thoughtful.

15. Anger Entry: Some people and situations spawn anger and even hatred. Keeping a record may reveal a pattern.

16. I Learned Entry: Are you growing? This record may give you a hint.

17. Don'ts Entry: None of us likes to repeat mistakes. List people, places, food, etc., that may be things to avoid for you.

18. Dream Entry: What was your dream? Why did you dream about that? What things from your daily life show up in your dreams? What might the dream mean?

19. Quote Entry: Record a quote which seems neat or meaningful. If you do not completely understand it, paraphrase it first. What does the quote mean? Can you give examples or explain the quote? Do you agree or disagree with the ideas? What does the quote have to do with me?

20. Visual Entry: Draw a picture about the day. Take time to paste a few things (pictures or words) into the journal.

21. Poetry Entry: Capture the day or an experience in images of poetry.

22. Free Association Entries: Put down one idea. What does it make you think of next? What next? It's a chain of thoughts.

23. Newspaper Article Entry: Report an experience or the ideas of a speaker in the form of a newspaper article complete with headline.

24. A day of Questions Entry: Write down questions which came up during the day. You may wish to try to answer some of them or just leave them as questions.

DIFFERENT STYLES FOR WRITING IN YOUR JOURNAL

Each of the styles below could be used for any of the twenty-four entries listed above.

1. Monologue: Talk to yourself--explain your day's events, feelings, thoughts and actions to you.

2. Role Play Monologue: Write a daily entry for someone you met or read about. What would his/her journal be like? What would it describe? How would it be written? Be sure to make a note to yourself about who you are role playing so you do not confuse yourself later.

3. Dialogue: Write your entry as a conversation. It could be between you and another person (an interview) or two other people. This might be difficult at first but it might make an interesting change of pace.

4. Variety of Styles: Try writing the same information or ideas in two or three styles--official/legal, humorous, stuffy/big words, a child. You might wish to imitate the style of certain authors for different entries, too.

BRAINSTORMING RULES

1. Set a specific time limit. Do not go beyond 20 minutes. Ten minutes is optimum.

2. Record all ideas on a board everyone can see. If one person does not hear the idea, he/she might react to seeing it. Most good ideas feed off not so good ideas. A word or phrase may trip the switch in another person's head. Appoint a recorder.

3. Say whatever comes to mind (if it even faintly applies to the subject). No matter how far out your idea is, it might jog somebody else into more practical thought.

4. Do not criticize any ideas. Set aside time afterward for evaluation, but never evaluate during the brainstorming session itself. Call anyone who tries to evaluate your idea.

5. Have a specific topic to brainstorm. (e.g., things to write in a Seminar journal, not just things to write).

6. Follow up the brainstorming session with a discussion evaluating the ideas recorded on the board. If there is a delay before this discussion is held, someone might forget what they meant by "journal entry."

STUDENT EVALUATION

Student Evaluation Criteria: What Do We Evaluate?

If you were in charge of this program, what criteria would you use for student evaluation?

Student Evaluation Process: How Do We Evaluate?

Write down the steps Senior Seminar uses to evaluate students at the end of each block and at the end of the semester.

INTRODUCTION TO PROBLEM SOLVING TECHNIQUES

It's easy to get in a rut. Everybody does it at one time or another. For example, you probably get out of bed on the same side every morning. You may take the same route to school each day. And you probably eat at just about the same time every evening.

Most people develop such habits unconsciously, never really realizing just exactly what they are doing. Habits are almost always based on past experiences. If you do something a certain way, and find that it works, you will have a tendency to do it the same way the next time, and the next, and the next--before you know it, you're in a rut.

There's nothing necessarily wrong with habits (except that they are boring). They make things easier. Once you have established a pattern, it is quicker and often more efficient to do something the same way every time you do it. It requires less energy and less thought--you function automatically.

But sometimes habits and patterns can get in the way of progress and creativity. This is particularly true in the area of problem solving. People develop habits in relation to the way they solve problems just as they might develop the habit of smoking or biting their fingernails. Such habits can get in the way of dealing with a problem and the problem solving techniques listed below might help should you ever feel at a loss for finding a solution.

The key point to remember: just because something has always worked for you in the past doesn't mean that it will work tomorrow. Be prepared to change and adapt.

FIVE TECHNIQUES OF PROBLEM SOLVING *

1. Self-Imposed Constraints
2. Generating Alternatives
3. Process of Elimination
4. Where Do You Start? (Choosing an Entry Point)
5. Breaking a Problem Apart

*Many of the concepts and some of the problems which appear in this section have been drawn from a book called Lateral Thinking: Creativity Step by Step by Edward DeBono (Harper and Row Publishers, New York: 1970)

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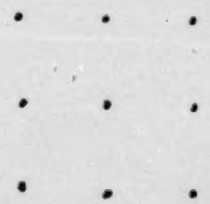
SELF-IMPOSED CONSTRAINTS

Probably the worst thing about habits in relation to problem solving is that they limit you. Sometimes a problem will seem difficult to solve if you approach it the way you have always approached similar problems - and that approach doesn't work. You may feel frustrated and disappointed and may even give up trying to solve the problem. When you limit yourself to only what you have known or done in the past, you may miss the solution altogether, or at the very least, by-pass a simpler one.

For example, suppose you decide you want to buy a car and raising the money is a problem. In the past, when you have needed money, you've always gone to your dad and asked for it. And pop has always come through. So you go to your dad and ask for a thousand bucks to get a car, and he says no, he can't afford it, and you're not responsible enough anyway. You come away feeling depressed, and maybe even mad at your dad. If you now feel this problem is impossible to solve, it's only because you are applying limits to yourself that don't really exist. (Your dad isn't the only source of money in the world.) Get it?

1. Try and solve the following simple problem: Link the nine dots shown below using only <u>four</u> straight lines, without lifting your pencil from the paper.

If you are having trouble with this puzzle, it is probably because you are making an assumption that isn't necessarily true: that the four lines must start and end with a dot and must be contained within the imaginary boundaries made by the nine dots. Try it again, without that assumption.



Look over the following situations and see if you can identify the limit each student is imposing on himself/herself which makes it hard for him/her to solve the problem.

2. Pat wants to know how to set up and run a small book store. She spends several hours researching at the library but finds little to really help her. She gives up on the project and does a report on Attila the Hun.

3. A student is supposed to meet at school (which is five miles away) to leave for a field trip at 7:30 a.m. At 7:00 he goes to his car and discovers he has two flat tires. He walks back to the house, slowly shaking his head, wondering if his teacher will ever believe the incredible excuse that he had two flat tires.

GENERATING ALTERNATIVES

"Generating alternatives" is one way to get around self-imposed constraints. This is a natural approach to solving problems that most of us use. When confronted with a difficult situation, we immediately start thinking about how to solve it, just as the student who wanted money for his car thought about asking his dad. The trouble with the way most of us use this technique, however, is that we stop considering alternatives as soon as we find one that works. Unfortunately, this is not necessarily the only or the best solution.

Sometimes it is good to go beyond just one solution...to not stop looking for alternatives even if you have found one that works. If you keep generating alternatives, you may come up with one that works better, faster, or cheaper. The way this technique works is simple. You promise yourself that when confronted with a problem you will think up at least "x" number of ways to solve it, before you make your decision. Don't just stop after the first one.

For example, if the student who wanted the car made himself think of five alternative solutions, he might come up with: get a job; wait to inherit the money from one of his rich relatives; ask his mother; borrow the money from a bank; or ask for donations from friends. This gives him a far wider range of alternatives, and a better chance of solving the problem.

"Brainstorming" sessions with groups of people are simply a way to generate alternatives on a larger scale. We have already used that technique during the discussion of student evaluation criteria.

1. On a separate piece of paper generate six alternative ways to divide a square into four pieces identical in size and shape. (Are you limiting yourself with a self-imposed constraint?)

Generate alternatives for each of the two situations listed below.

2. As a counselor at High Trails you are aware that one sixth grade boy is being picked on and laughed at by other students because he is not as bright as most students. What are your choices for dealing with this situation?

3. You are excited about your new block and anxious to work with your group. The group works well together except for one negative member who spends more time discounting others and showing off than working with others. What ways can the group resolve this problem?

PROCESS OF ELIMINATION

This is another problem solving technique with which most of us are familiar. It is most effective when used along with the technique of generating alternatives. Once you have identified all (or most) of the possible solutions to a given problem, you must seek out those solutions which are least satisfactory. This, simply stated, is the process of elimination.

In our example of the student who wants the car, after he has invented several different alternatives, he is confronted with the task of choosing between them.

He has to decide: should he ask his mom? or get the job? or borrow the money from a bank? This process, however, is sometimes more difficult than it sounds, particularly if a group is attempting to do it. Such an elimination of alternatives always involves values--you eliminate possibilities on the basis of some criteria. Which solution is the fastest? Whic is the cheapest? Which is morally right? Which might prevent future problems from developing?

Sometimes, when a person or group has trouble choosing between alternatives, it is because they have not thought out, or agreed upon, their criteria. If you are ever trying to eliminate solutions and having difficulty, make sure that you have specific, agreed-upon criteria.

And other times, it is difficult to choose between alternatives simply because you don't have enough information. Sometimes you have to go out and collect more data before you make a decision. For example, if you were getting the car, you might want to make sure you could get a loan from a bank or find out what interest you would be charged on a loan before you seriously considered that alternative.

Now try eliminating some of the alternatives you generated for the problems in the last section.

WHERE DO YOU START?
(Choosing an Entry Point)

The "entry point" refers to that part of a problem or situation that you deal with first. The entry point to any given problem is very important because often the first step you take in trying to solve a problem may determine whether or not you will be successful. The sequence in which ideas follow one another can completely determine the final outcome, even if the ideas themselves are the same.

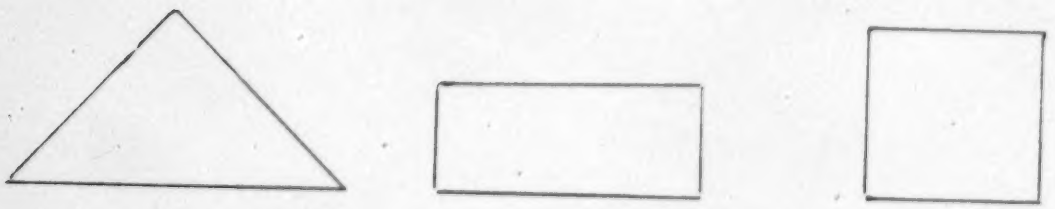
Take another look at the car problem. Suppose you've decided you'll find a job and earn the money for the car by working. But you'd like to have the car now, so you decide to ask your dad for a loan that you will promise to pay back a little at a time. Consider the following two different choices of entry points:

Choice 1	Choice 2
a) Ask dad for a loan	a) Find a job
b) Buy the car	b) Ask dad for a loan
c) Find a job	c) Buy the car
d) Earn the money to pay back dad	d) Earn the money to pay dad back

Can you see how the choice of entry points in this example might determine whether or not the student's problem is solved?

Try to apply this technique of considering different entry points to solving the following problems. List as many different entry points as you can think of and then select the one you think will best lead to a solution.

1. Three entry points are presented in the following geometrical problem. One entry point is to begin with the triangle. The second entry point is the rectangle and the third entry point is the square. Pick the best one of these three entry points and divide it into three pieces in such a way that you can recombine all three pieces to form both of the other two shapes.



WHERE DO YOU START? (continued)

2. Sandy has decided to do a slide show for her Mass Media project. She can't decide where to begin: take the pictures and see what she can put together, or plan the show and spend lots of lime looking for the right shots. What are your suggestions?

3. The mail arrives and Robert opens the report card from his old school to find the computer has, in error, listed all failing grades for him. Robert wants to enter a special program at his new school for which good grades are necessary. Schools in both locations are out for the summer, but acceptance in this program will be decided soon. Where does Robert begin to correct the error?

4. At the end of an Outdoor Challenge block one student does not have the tent which was checked out to her. She knows it was on the bus at the end of the trip but doesn't know what happened after that. She suspects another member of the group may have taken it. She wants to confront the group as a whole and ask the guilty person to step forward. What are some other starting points she might use to solve this problem? Which do you think is best?

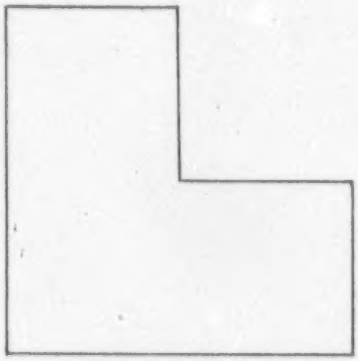
BREAKING A PROBLEM APART

Sometimes a problem is difficult to solve simply because of its size. It seems so massive that it is difficult for you to convince yourself that you can tackle something that great so you give up before you ever start. And sometimes the size of a problem conceals its nature and makes it difficult to see what could be a simple solution. When you are confronted with a problem that seems impossible to solve because of its size, "breaking the problem apart" can be a useful technique.

One part of this technique is to simply consider a problem as a combination of several smaller problems and then concentrate on solving each smaller problem one at a time until the larger problem takes care of itself. An alternative form of this technique is to start over with the original problem and try to divide it up into smaller parts in a totally new way. You can create new patterns or put the pieces back together in a different way--sometimes this will help you see the problem in a new way and a solution automatically comes to mind.

Try to use this technique to solve the following problems:

1. Divide the shape below into four pieces which are exactly the same in size, shape and area.



2. You are put in charge of planning a trip to the Grand Canyon. You've never been camping before and you have no idea how to plan such a trip. No one seems willing to help you or offer any advice. You are growing increasingly frustrated and up tight about the whole thing and are considering quitting the program. How might you "break the problem apart" to help you deal with this situation?

BREAKING A PROBLEM APART (continued)

3. Seminar students decide they want to have a mock trial for their Crime and Punishment block. This is a large undertaking and must be broken down into manageable tasks. What will be their major concerns?

4. You have been asked to design your own one-week block. This sounds like a major task, but if you break it up into smaller problems it is easier to handle. What individual problems are involved in setting up a one-week block of your own?

PROBLEM SOLVING EXERCISES

Six Bits Problem: What important points did you learn from this exercise?

Initiative Tests:

Which initiative tests did you do?

1.
2.
3.
4.

What steps did you take to solve the problem(s)?

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SIX STEPS IN THE LEARNING PROCESS*

(A Model for Problem-Solving)

The six steps which appear on the following page represent important points in the process of learning. As a model these steps will help you structure activities to meet learning goals you have set for yourself. You can apply these steps to any experience or project from which you want to learn. Many of the problem-solving techniques described in the previous pages maybe useful in the steps of the process of learning outlined in this article.

This model of the learning process is based upon the belief that all learning is the direct result of active problem-solving followed by a careful evaluation of the new ideas gained from an experience. The formula for learning requires a "problem"** the learner wants to solve arising from his/her experiences, and an opportunity for the learner to act on his/her ideas and to evaluate the outcomes. When you first begin to apply the steps to your own activities, they may seem awkward and sometimes "get in the way." Stick with it!! Understanding and applying the steps of the learning process will become a natural habit for you because it will help build your self-confidence, provide you with proof of success, and help you develop new skills and concepts which will, in turn, make it easier to tackle new learning problems or situations.

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*This model is a composite of ideas drawn from John Dewey (Democracy and Education, page 163), Roger Harrison and Richard L. Hopkins ("The Design of Cross-Cultural Training: An Alternative to the University Model," page 454) and the ideas of the members of the Senior Seminar staff.

**A "problem" in this sense can be something very specific and immediate, such as: "My car won't start. How can I get it started?" Or it can be less immediate and more general, such as: "I want to know more about how a car works. How can I find out that information?"

SIX STEPS IN THE LEARNING PROCESS (continued)

1. GATHER AND ORGANIZE INFORMATION ABOUT THE "ENVIRONMENT" OF YOUR TOPIC OF STUDY.

   Information can be gained from many different sources: interviews, readings, your own experiences, etc. This is an often neglected step in the problem-solving process simply because people naturally explore new areas of interest without realizing they could use the information later. Develop and test theories about the forces and processes at work in the environment of your topic of study. Knowing that this initial work is a part of the process will improve the attention you give it and its usefulness to you later in the process.

2. DEFINE A LEARNING PROBLEM YOU CAN SOLVE.

   Make sure you have identified the real problem and not just a symptom. Break the problem into its component parts if necessary. Often you cannot tackle the whole problem by yourself but you could address a part of the larger problem or provide valuable aid.

3. PLAN ACTIONS TO SOLVE THE LEARNING PROBLEM.

   The key to this step is to identify concrete actions you will take to solve your problem. Review the information you gathered in Step 1 that relates to the problem. Develop alternative approaches to solving the problem drawn from what you know about the environment in which the problem exists. Pick the approach you like best. Set specific, reasonable objectives. Make sure other people involved understand what you are trying to do.

4. GATHER AND REORGANIZE INFORMATION SPECIFICALLY RELATED TO YOUR SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM.

   Reexamine the information you have already collected. Identify and follow up resources and resource people useful in solving your problem. Set up new interviews, check new reading lists, try new activities. Arrange the new information in usable form together with the original related material.

5. TEST YOUR SOLUTION: TAKE ACTION.

   Present your ideas to a person who understands the problem and ask for feedback. Perform the tasks you have designed and examine the results.

6. STATE YOUR FEELINGS, PERCEPTIONS, AND THE THINGS YOU HAVE LEARNED FROM YOUR EXPERIENCE.

   Evaluate the results of your actions. Were you successful? If not, can you understand why your solution did not work? How did your feelings or opinions change? Do you see the problem differently than you did when you defined it? Restate your solution as clearly as possible.

   This is the critical step in the learning process. A careful statement of your experience will help to fix the ideas and skills you gained in your memory. Information will become knowledge, something you have learned.

IF YOU DON'T KNOW -- ASK!

You have been a student long enough to have grown weary of the popular truisms about asking questions. Remember? "If you don't ask questions, how do you expect to learn anything?" or "Ask a dumb question and get a dumb answer." Insulting as these remarks may be, they reveal how important questions are in the process of learning. Unfortunately, few people have gone beyond these general criticisms to consider how good questions can be developed.

Just as a model was used to outline the process for learning, a few models have been developed to help a person plan questions which will gather useful information. The key word in the preceding sentence is PLAN. In order to gain as much as possible from an interview or discussion, it is essential for a person to set some specific goals for the meeting and then develop questions to address those goals. In this sense, questions form an agenda, a purpose for the meeting. If you have no questions, there really is no reason to hold the meeting.

The first model we have introduced here is the most popular and is usually associated with journalism. The simple formula of the model offers a comprehensive guideline for study: Answer the questions Who, What, When, Where, Why and How and you will have most of the important information about your topic.

The second model is presented as a sequence of types of questions which illustrate that the form of the question will elicit differing kinds of information. Knowing the kind of information you want to gather and how to form the questions to accomplish your purposes are powerful tools for the self-directed learner.

WHO? WHAT? WHEN? WHERE? WHY? HOW?

The following items offer some important general guidelines concerning a method for gathering information about your learning problem.

General Questions

1. Predictions can aid you in your study. Predict what you will find in your visit. Consider 1) facilities, 2) people there including staff, administration, and others, 3) activities of those people, and 4) costs. This is only a start on the areas you might think about. Please feel free to add others as you predict.

2. What aspects are important to consider in understanding the purpose or function of the person, place or thing you will visit? For example, let's say you are visiting an old folk's home during Institutions. On what do you need to focus to discover the purpose of that place? You might consider the following questions or statements. Who runs the place? What are specific purposes stated by staff, administration, and old folks about the home? How do the old people feel about the way the place is run? How do you know they feel that way? Are their statements accurate? How will you find out? Make up a list of questions that will help you gather more information from the old folks, to help you decide the purpose or success of that home?

   Basically you are answering the questions Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How for any one or all of your visits. Many times if you haven't answered all these questions you have not gone into enough detail.

3. Choose a similar person, place, or thing to visit and make a comparison. What major aspects will you choose to show similarities and differences? How will you organize your information to better examine the similarities and differences?

4. What are some major points you feel are important to explain about this visit that will help someone else who hasn't been there to understand this person, place, or thing?

A BASIC QUESTION SEQUENCE ON INTERPRETING INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES

1. Open Questions:

   Designed to provide an opportunity for all persons to participate and to obtain information which will provide a foundation for further questioning. It's a question anyone can ask or answer without knowledge of a particular topic.

   The Characteristic of this Question Is Openness.

   Examples from Senior Seminar blocks:

   1. "What are some problems in the Colorado Springs Police Department?"
   2. "What are current problems with coal strip mining in Colorado?"
   3. "What aspects of geology do you see backpacking into the Grand Canyon?"

   Write two open questions on a block you will complete in Senior Seminar.

2. Focusing Questions:

   The focusing question is an extremely important element in the interpretation of information. It focuses on specific points that will later be compared, contrasted, and related to other points.

   Its basic purpose is to focus the attention on specific data as a central point for discussion.

   The Characteristic of this Question Is Detail.

   Examples from Senior Seminar block:

   1. "What are some things that are done in the crime lab at the Police Department to help in an investigation?"
   2. "What are some things that effect the environment from strip mining?"
   3. "What are some factors that are causing weathering of rock layers in the Grand Canyon?"

   Write two focus questions on a block you will complete in Senior Seminar.

3. Interpretive Questions

   Designed to compare, contrast, and seek logical relationships between the specific points brought out in the focus question(s).

   This type of question asks one to compare and contrast two or more specific points from the information; two or more groups of information; two or more feelings, concepts, or ideas, and express a perceived or inferred relationship between them.

The Characteristic of this Question Is Its Focus on Relationships

Examples from Senior Seminar blocks:

1. "What differences did you see in the way the crime lab handled different cases?"

2. "How would you compare the environmental problems of coal strip mining to underground coal mining?"

3. "How do you account for the differences in the weathering of the different rock layers in the Grand Canyon?"

Write two interpretive questions on a block you will complete in Senior Seminar.

4. Capstone Questions

Designed to obtain conclusion, summary, close.

This type of question should be asked at the close of a particular discussion and calls for a statement which summarizes in a generalized form what has been discussed so the generalization or big idea applies to a variety of situations. It calls for a conclusion, generalization or summary.

The Characteristic of the Capstone Question Is Its Conclusiveness

Examples from Senior Seminar blocks:

1. "How could we summarize the functions of the Colorado Springs Police Department?"

2. "Based on field experience and discussion of coal strip mining, what are the advantages and disadvantages?"

3. "Based on your observation of geological processes in the Grand Canyon, what can we say about weathering in arid climates?"

Write two capstone questions on a block you will complete in Senior Seminar.

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Arranging an Interview Over the Telephone

Another important skill for you to learn effectively is how to arrange an appointment over the telephone. You should always use the following steps:

1. First identify yourself.

2. Tell the person you are from Senior Seminar, a Colorado Springs Public Schools program for seniors using the community as your classroom.

3. Tell the person what you want: an interview, a short internship, a tour of their facility, etc. Give the reason you want to come - what it is you want to learn.

   Give dates: you need to be flexible and give people options. Ask them when it is most convenient for them for you to make your visit. Tell them the amount of time you would like to spend with them or their agency. Be polite and gracious.

Samples of Interviews in Person

Sometimes during the semester you will be dealing with people on a one-to-one basis. As a general rule, the time-tested journalistic questions of who, what, when, where, why and how are a good starting point. The following models can serve as a guide for conducting an interview.

Model 1 Situation: The student is taking the Crime and Punishment block and is interested in gathering information from the public defender about her role in a court trial. The student has made an initial contact for an appointment by telephone. Here are some questions the student asked.

1. What is your key role in this trial?

2. How were you selected to represent the defendent in this case?

3. Can anyone who has committed a crime have a public defender as his or her attorney?

4. What do you look for in selecting jurors?

5. How do you think you can win this case?

6. Who are your key witnesses and why?

7. Do you have a good chance of winning this case? Why or why not?

Model 2 Situation: The student is taking the In Search of a Fortune block and is interviewing an elderly miner who mined gold for 40 years and lived in the same town all his life. Here are some of the questions she asked the miner.

1. When did you begin mining? What was it like then?

2. Why did you select mining as your occupation?

3. What were conditions like in the mine in the 1920's?

4. How did mining methods change throughout your career?

5. Were you a member of a labor union? Why or why not?

6. What was this town like in the 1920's? How has it changed?

7. What was it like in this town during your childhood?

8. During your childhood, how expensive was food? What kinds of things did you eat?

9. Did you go to school? For how long?

Model 3 Situation: During the Institutions block, the student is interviewing a senior citizen who has lived in Colorado Springs all her life. He asks her the following questions.

1. Were you born in Colorado Springs.

2. What was Colorado Springs like when you were a child?

3. How did your parents treat you when you were growing up?

   a. Did they give you much responsibility?
   b. What were your most enjoyable moments with them?

4. What was school like?

   a. What kinds of activities did you do other than studying?
   b. Did you have any sports in school? Which ones?

5. What jobs did you do during your working years? Which jobs did you like best, Why?

6. What changes have you seen in Colorado Springs since your childhood?

7. How do you feel about people living in your neighborhood now?

METHODS OF PRESENTING INFORMATION AND IDEAS

In Senior Seminar students are required to share information with their peers. The following techniques will give you visual or audio methods to effectively share information.

1. Define the thing or process by giving its name, the group or category to which it belongs and those qualities about it which set it apart from the other members of that category.

   The stomach is an organ of the body which breaks down food to be digested.

   NAME GROUP QUALITY

2. OUTLINE
3. WRITE A PARAGRAPH ABOUT IT
4. TIME LINE
5. MOBILE
6. WORKSHEET WITH SPECIFIC QUESTIONS
7. MODEL OR DIORAMA
8. POSTER OR BULLETIN BOARD
9. COLLAGE OR ILLUSTRATIONS
10. CHART, GRAPH, MAP, OR DIAGRAM
11. NOTEBOOK
12. COMIC STRIP
13. PICTURES WITH CAPTIONS
14. DISCUSSION
15. FILMSTRIP
16. OPAQUE MOVIE
17. SLIDES
18. FILM
19. SOUND RECORDINGS
20. TRANSPARENCIES
21. VIDEO TAPE RECORDINGS (VTR)
22.
23.
24.

PRESENTATION METHODS PRACTICE SHEET

1. Define: choose one - spoon, beef jerky, trail mountain _____
   choose one - weaving, hiking, sleeping, thinking _____

2. Outlining: choose one

   a. the menu for a day
   b. information about the care of pets
   c. types of mass transit
   d.

3. Time Line: choose one

   a. seven great inventions of people
   b. important wars
   c. steps in exploration of outer space
   d.

4. Chart: choose one

   a. Senior Seminar semester schedule
   b. tonight's TV programming
   c. number of pages concerning each item below in the Sun and Gazette: sports, finances, comics, full page ads, household hints, classified ads
   d.

5. Graphs: do one of each type

   a. Draw a circle graph to show the ingredients and their proportions in a twinkie.
   b. Draw a bar graph which shows the salaries of law enforcement and judicial personnel. Include: judge, DA, sheriff, deputy, prison guard, warden, lawyer, legal secretary.
   c. Draw a line graph to illustrate the rainfall for the nine months of this year.

6. Diagram: choose one

   a. How is cheese made?
   b. the branches of the federal government
   c. the succession of choices for your future
   d.

7. Map out a trail which bypasses a marsh, climbs a small hill, passes a lake, and ends up at a cabin.

   or

   Map out the ideal 200 acre farm.

COMPARISON CHART FOR TWO SIMILAR VISITS

Many times visual aides such as charts, diagrams, pictures, help you and others understand the information you have gathered or are gathering. If you have made up a chart to fill out before the visit, you know exactly what information you want to gather. Below is an example for major items to consider on a specific visit to an old folks home. You would of course design your own areas of investigation, but perhaps some of the categories on this chart would apply to many visits. At any rate, this can serve as a possible model for you to develop your own comparison.

MAJOR CATEGORY	MYRON STRATTON HOME	SUNNY REST NURSING HOME
Administration		
Staff		
Cost to patients		
Operation costs		
Qualifications for entrance		
Living conditions		
Recreational facilities		
Philosophy of staff and administration		
Food program		

Summary points:

INDIVIDUAL LEARNING CONTRACTS

Sometimes it is hard to think of what you want to get out of an experience you have never had before. You may be frustrated that in Senior Seminar we ask you to pull off this magical trick. What we like to have you do is think ahead and imagine, predict, dream about, and conclude what it is that you would like to learn about this experience and why you want to learn it. On top of that we ask you to figure out how (the way, the process) you will go about learning that thing you have decided to learn. Because we believe in the "Nitty Gritty" of discovery, we ask you to be specific on both the items above. But that is not all. Not only do we ask you to decide what you want to learn, how you want to learn it, but finally we ask you to determine a method of evaluation. In other words we ask you to ask yourself the question "How will I know I have learned this thing I want to learn?" Now all this may sound incredibly complex, but if you break it down to specifics it really makes a lot of sense and is quite simple. You go through these steps every day of your life in one way or another.

Let's take a look at a couple of examples. If you want to be on the tennis team you might go through these steps:

1. What do I want to learn and why? Answer: How to play a good game of tennis so I can be on the tennis team.

2. How will I learn what I want to learn? Answer: Get my mom to hire a private tennis coach for me to learn and be good at the rules, strokes, strategies, and physical conditioning.

3. How will I know I have learned what I wanted to learn? Answer: When I am on the tennis team and winning regularly.

Or let's take even a more common example, money. Now it seems that most everybody wants and needs certain amounts of money for whatever reasons. Much of our life centers around what job we will take to earn that certain amount of money we think we need. You are in high school now and you want a car. So let's take a look at the steps you take to get the car.

1. What do I want and why? A car to provide a way to attend social events.

2. How will I get what I want? Get a job at $50.00 a week. Save all that money for six months and buy a cheap car.

3. How will I know what I got? When I am in my car cruising Nevada Avenue, I'll know I have been successful.

To repeat the basic idea again then, we decide what we want, how to get it, and how to evaluate if we got it. You will use these steps in each learning contract you write during the semester. The learning process is really the same only the names have been changed to protect the innocent! It is our hope then as a staff that you will approach each learning experience with the same enthusiasm and determination that you approach getting a car! How about that for a conclusion!

BUT WHY "CONTRACTS?"

In addition to our desire to help you become aware of the process of learning, another reason you are asked to write individual contracts in Senior Seminar is that contracts help put you in charge of your own learning and stimulates you to explore personal areas of interest. The staff is not responsible for your learning (they will help you with your ideas) - you will be responsible for what you do! The contract prods you to think carefully about what you want to learn, how you are going to learn it and how you want to be evaluated for each block.

You will write a contract for each learning block in Senior Seminar, which is negotiated with the staff for that block. The contract identified your learning goals (what you want to learn), activities for you to meet your learning goals (how you are going to do it) and the evaluation of the learning goal. Evaluation may include writing in your journal, presenting information to the group in your block, discussing information with the staff in charge of the block, writing a report or making a tape recording. If you wish to change any goals during a block, meet with your staff person and renegotiate that section with him or her. We are flexible!

In the next section we present guidelines for writing contracts, followed by two sample contracts. There are three areas you should include in each of your contracts. These are: 1) concepts or information you will learn, 2) skills you will learn, and 3) changes in attitudes and/or behaviors you would like to make. Review Block Expections on page 3 to refresh your memory about what these areas mean. (See examples.)

QUESTIONS MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED ABOUT CONTRACTS

WHY CONTRACTS?	They put you in charge of getting what you want for you. They help you focus on what you need.
HOW LONG?	One page is adequate for most contracts (but don't let this stop you from writing more).
WHAT STYLE?	Keep the vocabulary of your contract clear and straightforward so that you and the staff will easily understand what is meant.
HOW MUCH TIME DO I HAVE?	Contracts should be completed within one block.
SHOULD I BE REALISTIC?	Perfection or improvement is accomplished one step at a time. Keep your ADULT state in charge. Your kid or CHILD is apt to be wishful. The PARENT part of you is apt to be demanding. Your ADULT will be able to set realistic goals for your contract.
SHOULD I SHARE IT?	Yes! Share contracts with the rest of the group, your parents, and resource people. When people know what you want, it's amazing how helpful they can be!
SHOULD I BE SPECIFIC?	Yes! It is easy to write in vague and general terms. Be VERY specific and clear. It will be easier to accomplish the contract and you will be more satisfied with your work.

THREE BASIC TYPES OF CONTRACT GOALS IN SENIOR SEMINAR

Information and Concepts You Will Learn

1. Find out things available for you to learn. Decide which areas interest you the most.

2. Specifically, what do YOU want to know more about and learn by the end of the block.

3. What will you do to achieve this? (Write what? Read what? Go where? Talk with whom?...)

4. What is YOUR part in getting what you want? What will you do? Will it require someone else's assistance? Include what you want from someone else. (Do not demand it.) This is very negotiable - the other party needs to agree to what you want, and be able to supply it (activity part).

5. Can the things listed be measured? How can you know you have met the contract and learned what you wanted?

Skills You Will Learn

1. Select skills you want to develop each block. Skills can include many things such as successfully interviewing people, presenting information to your peers, learning to chop wood for a fireplace, planning menus for a group or making furniture.

2. What information do you need to learn this skill - from books, resource people, other sources. What activities will you do to achieve your goal along with actually doing the skill?

3. How do you measure if you have learned this skill? In many instances you can demonstrate for others how to do the skill or show a finished product to peers and staff.

Changes in Attitudes or Behaviors

1. Select behaviors, attitudes and feelings you want to develop, improve, or change. Identify what your behavior or attitude has been and why you would be better if it changed.

2. Explain how you are going to change it. Do not use the word "try."

3. Make sure it is measurable. Be specific with observable changes named in the evaluation.

MODEL CONTRACT - CHART FORM
Crime and Punishment

GOALS (What, Why)	ACTIVITIES (How)	EVALUATION
1. Find out what the Adult Probation Department does in Colorado Springs to determine if this is a good alternative to a prison sentence. (Information)	1. a. Attend 1/2 day briefing session on Adult Probation Department b. Spend three days in Adult Probation Department. Follow a person in investigation for one day and see how PR bonds are filled out. Attend a court hearing on PR bonds and complete the court observation sheet. Follow a person in supervision for two days and see how they handle people on probation. c. Read handout materials on adult probation. d. Visit county jail.	1. Turn in completed chart observation sheet. Explain Adult Probation Department in a five minute presentation to other students and staff. In journal, give opinion on whether probation is a good alternative to prison.
2. Find out how the Juvenile Probation Department operates. (Information)	2. Talk with person who works as a juvenile probation officer on his/her duties.	2. Write summary in journal.
3. Compare the Colorado State Penitentiary with the Colorado Reformatory as to conditions and the way inmates are handled. a. Find out about the incentive program at the reformatory. b. Talk to inmates. c. Does rehabilitation occur in prisons? (Information)	3. a. Visit the Colorado State Penitentiary at Canon City. Tour medium security. Tour the women's institution. Talk to inmates on conditions (vocational training). b. Visit the Colorado Reformatory. Tour the institution. Find out about the incentive program. Talk to inmates on conditions (vocational training.	3. Show knowledge by discussion of information during group debriefing session with staff during evaluation and in journal.

	c. Read one article from "Criminal Life, Views from the Inside" and information pertaining to Colorado prisons.	
4. Find out alternatives to prison. (Information)	4. a. Discuss alternatives with staff at Adult Probation Department. b. Read The Crime of Punishment by Karl Manninger. c. Read dittoed material on the "Alternatives to incarceration."	4. Show knowledge by discussion with students and staff during debriefing.
5. Keep an open mind listening to both sides of a controversial subject such as prisons vs. alternatives to prisons. (Change in Attitude)	5. a. Attend all Seminar sessions pertaining to prisons and alternatives. Ask questions of speakers on their feelings. b. Read material concerning prisons as listed under 2 and 3.	5. Asking fair, courteous questions of speakers on this topic. Discussion of both sides with staff.
6. Take initiative in setting up own learning experiences. (Change in Behavior)	6. a. Set up interview with juvenile probation officer. b. Visit county jail by taking own tour.	6. Taking action on setting up and doing activities.
7. Learn the skill of interviewing. (Skill)	7. a. Prepare questions and practice the interview with another student. b. Conduct interview with a police officer.	7. a. Tape the interview and play parts of it at group sharing for criticism. b. Ask the police officer for feedback on the interview.

MODEL CONTRACT
DOLLAR POWER

When I graduate in four months, I will be on my own without my parents support. This fact motivates me to set the following objectives:

1. The skill of budgeting money is important. I will demonstrate my ability to budget effectively by researching and developing a personal monthly budget.

2. After interviewing the credit manager of a bank and an officer of a credit union, I will demonstrate my knowledge of the good use of credit in an oral report to the staff.

3. I will demonstrate my knowledge of income taxes by figuring and filing my own federal and state income tax forms.

4. I feel it is important for me to be able to use community resources. I will demonstrate my effectiveness with this skill by setting up, on my own, at least two resource contacts and carrying through the related projects. The contracts and the projects are:

   a. insurance agent - develop a life, health, and auto insurance plan.
   b. used car salesperson - to make a deal on a car I want.

5. I have a tendency to be late to meetings and appointments. I want to stop discounting others in this way, and will do so by being on time for all meetings and appointments in this block.

6. I tend to not take responsibility for my own learning as much as I should. In this block I will demonstrate that I am an <u>active</u> <u>learner</u> by preparing significant questions before sessions and making sure I get the answers to those questions.

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SUMMARY OF CONTRACT EXPECTATIONS

A number of materials have been presented and utilized in the early days of the semester to help present the concept of contracts and then develop this concept into a useable and valuable tool to assist in one's learning. Among these tools are "Points for Contracts," and the model contracts, the mini-contract exercise, the various materials of this booklet, and activities during the first weeks of the semester. This sheet is intended to review a number of aspects of the process and provide some more guidance as you write your contract for a particular block.

Briefly stated, a CONTRACT is an agreement between student and staff that identifies the following: What are you going to learn? How are you going to learn it? How will you and others know you have learned it (evaluation)?

START with what you want to LEARN, then go to what you want to DO to learn those things (how you are going to learn), and finally spell out how the learning will be evaluated.

Every ACTIVITY should relate to what you want to learn - that is, each ACTIVITY should relate to one or more of your goals.

If a given ACTIVITY does not relate to any of your GOALS, ask yourself why you are doing it. If it will not help you achieve what you wish to learn, perhaps that activity should be dropped, or perhaps it indicates a new area of interest, and thus you should write a new GOAL for that area.

BE SPECIFIC! It is much easier to meet the goals if they are specific. Both you and others will then readily know when and if it has been accomplished. This relates to the EVALUATION. A goal that is specific will clearly spell out how it is to be evaluated.

Each contract should include informational, skill and behavioral goals. The above notes apply to all types.

A detailed SCHEDULE should be part of each contract. This schedule will define specific events, and it will also include the use of unstructured time. It is important that staff know where you will be, what you will be doing, and how we can contact you during this independent study time.

All of your work must be DOCUMENTED. This is particularly critical for your independent work. Keep a detailed record of times, places, events and activities for all of your work for the block.

Writing and carrying out these contracts is a learning process. While we do not expect instant perfection, we do expect that as the semester progresses your contracts will become more polished, well thought out and well written. We will also increasingly expect higher expectations to be set and higher quality work to be done by you as the semester progresses.

The contract identifies the basic learning you wish to achieve, but it is by no means your complete preparation for the various experiences. You should prepare for each specific activity in advance, in most cases in a written form. Refer to the "Basic Question Sequence" and "Who? What? When? Where? How?" sheets, and other materials of this booklet. Use these aides and whatever other methods you

wish to help in your preparation, but the important thing is to be well prepared in advance in a written form. You may wish to use your journal as a notebook for your work.

When working with a resource person, give a copy of your contract to that person and review it with him or her. You may want to do the same with your written questions. That way he or she will better know your needs and interests, and so will be better able to help you with them.

PROBLEMS IN COMMUNICATION

How well do you give directions? You can discover this by the following exercises.

1. Brother's Keeper or My House:
   What problems did you have with this exercise.

   Why?

   Did your communication skills improve in this exercise? Explain how.

2. Group Jump Rope:
   How well did you communicate as a group?

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SKILLS IN COMMUNICATION: OWNING YOUR OWN FEELINGS

In spite of our best efforts to remain objective and rational during all conversations with people, talks are often muddied by misunderstandings. Problems or conflicts between individuals are often the result of poor communication skills. Thus, those conflicts can often be resolved by improving the individual's skills in communication. Below are a few examples of some communication problems and positive approaches to improving the communication.

Who Owns the Problem?

If I am the person who is bothered by the situation, if I am the person who brought up the issue, then it must be my problem, right? Right! We often try to blame our frustration on the other person rather than ourselves; when in reality if I am bothered, then it is my problem. Sometimes the other person may also be bothered, in which case he or she also has a problem. In this exercise we will not attempt to deal with the other persons problem, but only with situations where "I" have the problem.

I/You Messages

Often we do not accept responsibility for our own problems and try verbally to pass it on to the other person. The most frequent way we do that is by using "You" messages: "You are mean." "You frightened me." "You are rude." Who likes to be accused of such things? The person to whom I am talking will probably get defensive or angry with me for implying he or she is a bad person. I have attacked the person instead of identifying the behavior that I disliked. Moreover, I tried to place the responsibility for my problem on the other person rather than on myself.

These problems can be avoided by the use of "I" messages. First, "I" messages recognize that it is my problem. I am the one who felt hurt, who felt scared, who felt discounted. It is my problem. "I" messages identify the behavior without condemning the other person and they describe my feelings. The "You" message condemns the other person without telling him or her my real feelings. The "I" message reports accurately the behavior without insulting the person, conveying my feeling about the actions, and also recognizing that it is my problem.

Now you've left an opening for the other person to respond if he or she wishes, and he or she is much less likely to be defensive about it.

CHANGING "YOU" MESSAGES TO "I" MESSAGES

"You're mean!" becomes "I feel hurt."
"You frighten me." becomes "I'm scared."

Perception Checks

We often go wrong in communication simply because the message received was not the message sent or at least intended to be sent. How many times has someone misunderstood what you were trying to say, or how many times have you misunderstood someone else, and it led to a conflict or some other problem. Even more often we get mixed signals about the feelings behind the message being

given: Someone says "yes," but you know from their voice that he or she meant "no." Perhaps someone talks about one problem but you get the feeling that something else is the real reason the person is upset. You can test many of your suspicions with a "Perception Check." You may pick up a mood or feeling:

"I feel like you are tuning me out. Do you want me to stop talking about this now?"

"You have been very quiet today. Are you upset that I didn't call you last night?"

You may not be right in your guess. If not, the other person will let you know, and probably give you the accurate message. Each of you will better understand the other person, and be better able to resolve the problem.

WHAT YOU ARE AS A PERSON

Everyone has three parts, or persons, within himself or herself; a PARENT, an ADULT, and a CHILD. These parts are known technically as ego states. The Parent in you feels and behaves in the same ways your mother or father, or whoever raised you, did. Your Parent can be critical, or helping, or both. The Adult is the part of you that figures things out by looking at the facts. Your Adult is your "computer," the part that uses facts to make decisions. The Child in you is what you were when you were little. Your Child has the same feelings and ways of behaving you had when you were very young. He or she can be "natural;" that is, act on his or her own, not under the influence of your internal Parent; or he or she can be "adapted" so as to please your internal Parent. Each of your three states has his or her own ways of feeling and behaving.

Often the three ego states disagree with one another, and you feel part of you wants one thing, and another part of you wants another. Usually the best way to solve a problem like that is to have your Adult decide. The ideal situation is to have all three parts of you working well together.

Your three ego states are like voices in you. The Parent is the one who says things like, "You should," "You must," "You should not," or "Don't." Slogans like, "If you want something done right, do it yourself," "A woman's place is in the home," "Boys will be boys," "You can't win," etc., are usually from the Parent. Your Child may say, "I want what I want when I want it," or, "Try and make me." The Adult in you prefers to operate on facts, not feelings. He or she says things like, "Here is how this works." Listen to the voices within you and you will "hear" your Parent, Adult, and Child. You may not always hear words, but you will get messages from the feelings within you. All of us have a Little Kid part in us. Grownups can be Kids again, and kids can be Adults.

A young boy, after hitting an old man while trying to rob him, said to his probation officer, "I knew exactly what I was doing; I should not have done it; but I felt like doing it anyhow." Take this sentence apart, and see if you can decide which part of it probably came from his Adult, which part from his Parent, and which part from his Child.

A father spanking his son said, "It's not that I want to do this. I have to do this." Who do you think is doing the talking? The father's Parent, Adult, or Child?

You can readily learn to tell which part of you is in control. Here are four ways of checking:

1. Look at your behavior. It includes your posture, the way you stand, sit, or walk; your voice; the words you use. For example, listen to the following words: cute, marvelous, awful, childish, filthy. These are usually Parent words. Suitable, practical, and correct are usually Adult words. Words like gee, wow, won't, and can't are common Child words.

2. Watch how you get along with people. If the Parent in you is bossy, or thinks he or she knows it all, he or she will often upset the Child in other people. If the Child in you is fun-loving and happy, the Child in others will enjoy being around you, and have fun with you. When you behave as an Adult, there is a good chance that the people around you will be Adult towards you.

3. Check your early years, your childhood. You may remember how you spoke when you were little, and how your mother and father talked. Sometimes you will notice that you are talking exactly the same way you use to when you were a child. Then you will know you are speaking as a Child. Sometimes you will hear yourself say things exactly the way your mother or father did. You are then speaking as a Parent.

4. Check your own feelings. This is the most important test. You can actually feel the state or part of you that is active in you at any given moment.

   Remember, all three parts are you. All three are important, but the Child is probably the most important. You cannot do away with the Child in yourself. You would not want to, because the Child is the most fun. It is your Adult's job to help meet the Child's needs without getting into trouble. Your Parent's job is to treat the child in you with respect and love. To understand yourself, you have to look inside yourself: 1) to see which part of you that you allow to control yourself inside yourself.

Ask yourself these questions: How do I treat myself? What kind of Parent am I to myself? Do I have a scolding Parent inside me, or an encouraging Parent? Does my Adult run my life so that I can have plenty of Child fun without getting into trouble with myself or with others? Does my Parent really treat my Child with love?

Reference:

Campos, Leonard and Paul McCormick. Introduce Yourself to Transactional Analysis.

STROKES

Everyone needs strokes. A stroke is a pat on the back, or a word of recognition. A kick on the shins is also a stroke. Everyone needs to get and give some kind of stroking, pleasant or unpleasant. A child would rather be spanked than completely ignored. A stroke that helps you feel you are okay is called a positive stroke. One that tells you that you are not okay is a negative stroke. Loving is a positive stroke. Hating is a negative stroke.

A stroke given to you for what you do rather than for what you are is a conditional stroke. For example, if one of your parents says to you, "I like you when you do as you're told," he or she is giving you a stroke on the condition that you give something in return. He or she is not stroking you for what you are. When a stroke is given to you for what you are rather than for what you do, as when one of your parents says, "I love you because you are you," his or her stroke is unconditional. It has no string attached.

When you are given strokes only for doing "good things" and not for being who you are, you may soon resent doing "good things," and react in a negative way, perhaps with anger. Everyone seems to need much unconditional stroking. You probably prefer to be told that you are okay for what you are, rather than only for what you do.

Strokes are necessary for physical and mental health. Without strokes, infants may die, because their urge to live decreases. Parents can stunt the healthy growth of their baby by discounting his or her need for strokes. When a parent repeatedly ignores his or her crying infant and says, "Oh, he or she always howls like that," the parent is discounting the child. He or she may whimper himself or herself back to sleep, the need for stroking unmet.

As you grow up you become more willing to take word stroking instead of the physical stroking you had when you were a little baby. You still need and want physical stroking, but you often have to settle for word (symbolic) stroking. Stroking for being is more important than stroking for doing. This is an important lesson. You need not feel ashamed to ask for positive stroking. A good question to ask yourself, "What kind of strokes do I make sure I get, and how do I make sure I get them?" One of the best ways to get positive strokes is to give them.

The kind of strokes you give and get depends on how the Child in you feels about yourself and others. If the Child in you feels not okay, you probably learned to settle for more negative than positive strokes. You may turn down positive strokes, feeling you don't deserve them. You may even go out of your way to collect negative strokes. Although you want compliments, you may feel uncomfortable getting them. When you do get one, you may think the person giving it is just being polite, or wants something.

If you feel okay about yourself you probably draw on a stroke reserve. Having received plenty of positive strokes, you have a ready supply to be given and to enjoy for yourself. Being open to positive strokes, you get more, and have more time and energy to be a tolerant Parent, a competent Adult, and a fun-loving Child.

References:

Jongeward, Dorothy and Muriel James. Born to Win.

Jongeward and James. Winning with People: Group Exercise in Transactional Analysis.

THE WAYS PEOPLE STRUCTURE TIME

All time is structured in only six ways.

Withdrawal is a way of structuring time and can be either physical or psychologoical. This behavior can come from any of the three ego states. For example, if withdrawal comes from the Adapted Child it is often a replay of a person's childhood. Choosing withdrawal may have been a form of protection from pain or conflict or it may have been the result of training. A child told repeatedly "Go to your room and shut the door and don't come out until you have a smile on your face" can learn to withdraw behind a forced smile.

When a person withdraws psychologically, it is often into a fantasy world. His/her fantasies are likely to be of uncensored pleasure or violence, creative imaginings, or learned fears and catastrophic expectations. Everyone withdraws into fantasy from time to time. Who hasn't engaged in some fanciful, uncensored pleasure? When listening to a dull speech, withdrawal into fantasy may be the best use of time.

Ritual transactions are simple and stereotyped complementary transactions like everyday hellos and goodbyes. If someone says, "Good morning, how are you?" he/she is, in most instances, not actually inquiring into the other person's health and feelings; he/she is expecting to receive a ritualistic response, "Fine, how are you?" In this brief encounter both persons get maintenance strokes.

Pastime transactions are those in which people pass time with one another by talking about innocuous subjects, such as the weather. These superficial exchanges are often used between people who don't know each other well. For example, at a dinner party it is not uncommon for the men to pass the time talking about occupations, cars, sports, or the stock market, while the women pass the time talking about recipes, children or decorating.

Games have certain advantages. One "advantage" of playing psychological games is to structure time. For example, a secretary may play Blemish with the boss by taking only a few minutes to point out to him that he always forgets to put the "s" on the third person singular verb or that he misspells "absence."

Other games, such as Debtor, can structure a lifetime. For example, when a young married couple play Debtor, they go into heavy debt for furniture, appliances, cars, boats, and so on, and with each salary raise they go further into debt - bigger house, two cars, and so forth. For a whole lifetime, no matter what they earn, they're always in debt. When Debtor players play a "harder" game, they may end up filing for bankruptcy or going to jail which fills even more time.

Activities are ways of structuring time that deal with external reality and are commonly thought of as work, getting something done. Activities are often what people want to do, need to do, or have to do, such as preparing a memo, building a bridge, sewing a dress, programming a computer. In the midst of getting a job done, rituals, pastimes, games, and even intimacy may occur.

Intimacy involves genuine caring and authenticity. It occurs in moments that are free of games and free of exploitation - those rare moments of human contact that arouse feelings of tenderness, empathy and affection.

The sense of intimacy can occur in the midst of a crowd or in a continuing friendship, in a marriage relationship, or at work. For example, a father looks into the tear-soiled face of his son who has buried his dog. He puts his arm around the boy and says, "It's tough to bury a good friend." The boy melts into his father's arms, releasing his grief. For that moment they are intimate. Two people working together have an important proposal rejected. Without words, a feeling of understanding of their mutual disappointment passes between them.

A man and woman, open and trusting toward each other, spontaneously embrace with warm affection.

Intimacy is sometimes frightening. In involves risk. It involves being vulnerable. Many times it seems easier to pass time or to play games than to risk feelings either of affection or of rejection.

Reference:

Jongeward, Dorothy and Muriel James. Winning with People: Group Exercise in Transactional Analysis.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION
A Negotiation Model

Another model!!! (Models are useful when you can't remember the details of every discussion. Like a shopping list, a model can remind you to cover all the major points.) In this model, an outline has been presented to help you structure changes you want to make in a relationship with some other person. All four steps are essential. Both parties must have an opportunity to state their feelings. It must be clear that each party understands the other's point of view. Both parties must believe that resolving the conflict will be worth a commitment of time and energy. Finally, both parties must agree to take concrete steps to solve the problem.

Both people must agree to do this for this technique to work.

Step 1: Catharsis. I feel _____. First one person, then the other.
I want _____. All in "I messages."

Purpose: Get the cards out on the table.

Don't say: "I feel that you..."

Step 2: Paraphrase. Each party verbalizes the other party's position - what the other is thinking and feeling.

Purpose: Avoid misunderstanding.

Step 3: Commitment. Do we really want to solve this, or shall we let it go as it has been?

Purpose: Decide if solving the problem is really important.

Step 4: Contract: Must involve changes for both.
Never, "I would be happy if only you..."

Purpose: Make a specific plan, an agreement, to eliminate or minimize the problem.